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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Doctor of Arts in English Program for Community College Teachers of English offered at the University of Michigan. The program was established in response to needs expressed by community college administrators and teachers of English. The doctoral program is described in detail regarding admissions criteria, the core courses, elective course sequences, the visiting teacher experience, and the doctoral project. (SW)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN'S DOCTOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

BY TIMOTHY G. DAVIES

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The University of Michigan's Doctor of Arts in English Program for Community College Teachers of English

by Timothy G. Davies

The University of Michigan's Doctor of Arts in English Program was conceived and nurtured by a handful of English faculty in response to needs expressed by community college administrators and teachers of English. Planning for the program began in 1968, proceeded through three long years of internal brainstorming checked carefully against the needs and perceptions of community college personnel and reached fruition in August of 1971 with the admission of the first class of D.A. students. Like most D.A. Program faculties, Michigan's was determined to emphasize teaching rather than research. Unlike many D.A. programs the clientele targeted were successful community college instructors as well as some four year college instructors responsible for teaching English primarily to freshmen and sophomores. A final meeting between community college representatives and the D.A. faculty was held at the University of Michigan in August of 1971. During this session the basic components of the program were discussed, modified and established: admissions criteria, the core courses, elective course sequences, the visiting teacher experience, and the doctoral project.

Qualifications For Admission

Homogeneity can be the cause of stagnation in any group regardless of its purpose; so the admissions committee reasoned as it selected students for the first D.A. class. In order to create a heterogeneous population they admitted students with no teaching experience along with those who had three years or more; they admitted students just completing the B.A. in English along with those who had received the M.A.

in English and earned hours beyond. The original thought as expressed by one committee member was to mix recruits with veterans, hoping that the realism of the battled-hardened would train the energy and direct the idealism of the untried. This planned interaction did not occur. If anything, the students who had not taught felt overwhelmed by the course material, and more importantly by the obvious "savvy" and well defined problems and questions which the experienced teachers brought to the group.

While the committee has not resolved the experience- no experience question, there has not, in selecting the last two groups of students, been any attempt to mix the groups in terms of experience, although attempts have been made to seek groups diverse in race, sex, geographical and professional background. The following criteria, while not hard and fast in any one area, are the bases used by the selection committee for admission to the D.A. program:

1. An M.A. or M.A.T. in English or its equivalent.
2. Evidence of past academic success.
3. At least three years of successful teaching experience and qualities of educational leadership as determined by recommendations from colleagues, students, administrators, academic professors, and a self appraisal.
4. Evidence of prior and future commitment to students as expressed by the statement of purpose.

It must be stated again that flexibility exits within these criteria and the committee assesses each individual student on his own merit,

experience, and motivation in future professional life. An important aspect of the program has been the D.A. faculty's freedom to select its own students, allowing latitude for risk taking and experiment with non-conventional predictors.

Once accepted, a student is expected to be enrolled in the program full time for two specific reasons. First, experience has shown that teaching full or part-time does not allow the student time to understand and internalize the new material he is studying. We learned from experience in a trial course taught to a group of practicing teachers that simultaneous learning and teaching -- particularly when the learning involves what is new and radical -- often puts the teacher/student in the awkward position of attempting practical application of partial or half-learned theories within his own classroom. Another danger is his trying a new idea, having it fail, and then choosing to discard the innovation as unworkable because failure is attributed to the idea rather than to limited expertise in using it. Second, an increasing majority of our applicants to the program are community college instructors who have been granted a one year's leave with or without salary and are obliged to return to their home institutions after that one calendar year. Because of this pattern, the D.A. committee has developed an academic schedule which allows for the completion of all course work for the D.A. in one calendar year. For the student, this means successfully completing 12-14 credit hours during fall and winter terms and 6 credit hours during the spring term. So demanding an academic load does not allow time for teaching assignments, either for the purpose of

experimentation or supplementary income. The third class of D.A. students enrolled in the fall of 1973, and with the exception of three or four of the forty-seven students involved over the program's three years of life all have felt the full-time requirement to be realistic and beneficial in helping them maximize their total learning experience.

The Core Courses

In so far as possible, the Michigan Doctor of Arts program has sought to build its curricula from courses already existing in the Department of English and in other departments of the University. However, no existing courses were specifically designed to meet the needs of two-year college English teachers. The core courses designed for the D.A. program are intended to help those teachers identify and define problems they were facing in their full time teaching positions, to assist them in acquiring new knowledge needed to solve these problems, and to remedy deficiencies most often pointed out in conventional graduate programs: 1)insufficient preparation for teaching composition and developmental reading; 2) failure to give attention to variety and practicality in approaches to composition and literature; 3) failure to acquaint future teachers with the special character of two-year colleges and their students. The core courses are limited to D.A. students to promote the sharing of experiences and information and the formation of peer groups which can work efficiently together. It has been our experience that our students learn as much from each other as they do from us.

English 517-518: (8 semester credit hours)

This two-term course is an examination and discovery of innovative approaches to composition and to the development of other skills of literacy. The students define realistic and defensible goals for teaching the skills of literacy to community college students, and examine and criticize traditional approaches to writing relative to those goals. They explore the problems of motivating non-readers and reluctant readers, and learn enough about diagnostic and standardized tests to be able to work effectively with teachers of remedial and developmental reading and writing. The course incorporates some recent findings from linguistics, as they bear directly on the teaching of language use. Practices in criticizing writing are examined with regard to the following axioms: that Standard English, as it is usually defined, is merely one of several forms of English and not necessarily the most important medium for all occasions; that language deficiences must be distinguished from dialect differences in the teaching of reading and writing; that the writing teacher must be sensitive to the social and personal implications of dialect difference as he reads and comments on papers. The course points quite openly toward curricular and practical reform in beginning English classes, with the assumption that conventional freshman English courses have been particularly unsuccessful with community college students.

English 519: (3 semester credit hours)

In order to appreciate -- understand and become aware of -- our pluralistic culture students in this seminar explore innovative and non-traditional approaches to teaching elements of popular culture: music, comics, radio, television, literature, drama, film, and spontaneous happenings. The seminar strives toward increasing the student's sensitivity to popular culture, his ability to analyze that culture, and seeks to help him improve his effectiveness in the teaching of popular culture to undergraduates.

Elective Courses

The student is encouraged to take some courses outside of the English Department when such courses contribute to a broadening of the individual's background or provides him with specific knowledge or awareness related to his professional responsibilities upon returning to full-time teaching. There are two general plans for elective work outside the department. First, the student who wants to gain a broad background for interdisciplinary teaching may scatter his course selections across several departments -- art, music, and literature, for example, preparing himself to teach a literature or a humanities course from several different perspectives. Second, the student who wishes to concentrate in one cognate area is able to do so in fields such as Afro-American Literature, applied linguistics, psychology of personality and motivation. The major requirement for all elective course work both in and out of the department is that the student with the

help of his advisor build a coherent program which is germane to his future teaching responsibilities.

Visiting Teacher Experience

Spending one to three semesters teaching at one of the cooperating institutions is one of the most valuable experiences for the student and crucial to the improvement of undergraduate education. Since the D.A. students are successful teachers in the field, this experience is not considered an internship in the same sense that many programs use that term. Ideally, the D.A. student enters the program having identified several problems he has encountered in teaching. During his year on campus he has both the time and resources to define, carefully, the parameters of the problems that concern him, analyzing previous attempts to solve these problems. By the end of his residency he has developed, redesigned, or modified an approach which will address at least one of his original problems. The visiting teacher experience is then a time for the student's experimentation with his project.

The visiting experience can be used for other purposes. Currently, a student is developing an interdisciplinary course in women's studies which she will introduce as a first time offering in a local community college. This student's program thus includes an opportunity to plan and develop the course, implement it, then have it evaluated by students and faculty. Her work will provide the college community with a well developed course in women's studies, which its faculty is currently too over burdened to prepare, at the same time that it

enriches her as a teacher. Moreover, the presence of the visiting teacher provides opportunities for training sessions for those faculty members who have the desire to participate in them as a prelude to later teaching the course.

The materials gathered by the visiting teacher, her course plans, her evaluations - will also be available for use by local faculty and, through the doctoral project, to the largest two-year college community. In short, we seek to maximize the impact of what we are trying to do - allowing what an individual has learned for her own benefit to be transmitted to her own students, to the faculty with whom she teaches and to the profession at large.

An example of such impact occurred in 1971 when I was Director of the Division of Humanities at Miami-Dade Community College. Five D.A. visiting teachers spent two semsters in our English department experimenting with their ideas. While each visiting teacher helped explore one or another of the new directions being followed by others at Dade, one project, aimed at an area that was underdeveloped, changed that community college district significantly. The project dealt with prison libraries, trying to couple their development to long range curricular plans based on the educational needs of inmates. One major drawback the project encountered was the lack of a tuition waiver for the inmates. Seeing the success generated by this project Dr. Peter Masiko, President of Miami-Dade Community College District, asked the board of trustees to waive tuition for any inmate in a state or county penal institution. Within one semester after the visiting teacher returned to the University of Michigan, the College, with

several faculty assuming responsibility, increased its prison program from 40 students to 254. Now almost two years later the program has continued to flourish and has become a major thrust in Miami-Dade's outreach endeavor. While situations such as these are not common, they do represent the extent to which this symbiotic relationship can work.

Requirements for the visiting teacher experience are fairly flexible; however, one requirement is mandatory. The visiting teacher must be scheduled to a part-time teaching assignment. If full-time faculty had the time to implement experimental courses, our students would have done so at their home institutions. Few had such an opportunity. Thus, whether a student is returning to his home institution or whether he accepts a visiting teacher position at one of our cooperating institutions, he must be on a reduced teaching assignment for a minimum of one term. We think this requirement is simply realistic - based solidly on what we know about the debilitating teacher loads in two-year colleges. Other requirements for the successful completion of this experience include: 1) visits by one of the D.A. faculty when possible. Often the D.A. faculty are able to visit those students sent to distant colleges by combining the visit with consulting or inservice training. The host institution pays travel (sometimes expenses), the D.A. faculty waives his consultant fees, but combines his visit with, say a workshop on compositional strategies or on features of non-standard dialects. 2) a journal in which specific responses to the project being experimented with are recorded on a weekly basis. 3) student evaluations, which may be part of the community college systematic

evaluation of instructors or created by the visiting teacher. 4) a written evaluation from the community college faculty member(s) with whom the visiting teacher has been working and sharing ideas. Of primary importance throughout this experience is the faculty person who works with the visiting teacher. This person who donates his time and effort provides a "reality check" for the visiting teacher: he must be someone who can test the new and untried against past experiences of local conditions. If the Doctor of Arts project is to have significant meaning to the teaching of English at the community college, it must be borne out here in the day-to-day world of community college instruction.

Doctoral Project

Much has been intimated already about the D.A. project. Its main thrust is to provide an opportunity for the student to develop personal and professional competence by giving extended treatment to a single problem, and to encourage research into areas often neglected in conventional Ph.D. dissertations. The format for the doctoral project is flexible enough to permit a single extended work or a series of shorter, related papers, the development of a textbook or of ungathered classroom materials, and audio-visual materials. The project allows for the possibility of joint or even group ventures, particularly those involving experimentation in classrooms. Since the doctoral project is intended to contribute as much to the student's own development as it does to new knowledge and the teaching of English, the subject and format may vary to serve individual needs.

The best evidence that the intent has been carried out is in the projects already completed:

Steve Chennault: "Silence Is Black: Black Attitudes In an Urban Classroom:

Bernard Riley: "Reading and Writing in the Community College: Building Upon Tacit Linguistic Knowledge"

Don Coonley: "Indivisual Insights Into Writing"

Virgil Gulker: "The Penal English Course"

Darrel Staat: "Technological Literacy: The Student As Inventor"

Paul Swets: "Experimental Research in Teaching Rhetoric"

Maury Dean: "Pop-Rock Comp: Resurrection of Freshman English"

Cathy Lamb: "On Suffering Change: Toward a Theory of Instruction in the Art of Invention"

The diversity and individuality evidence in each of these projects reminds the D.A. committee on a day-to-day basis tht the most important aspect of all projects is relevance to the community college instructor of English. If resitricted to the format and style of Ph.D. dissertations, their applicability might well be lost to the audience we wish addressed-practicing two-year college teachers.

Awareness

Conceived in response to student and teacher outcrys at the community college, the D.A. Program has attempted to improve the quality of English instruction especially in urban community colleges and to provide a

doctoral degree which would meet the needs of those instructors who are dedicating their lives -- their beings -- to teaching in a community college. The D.A. committee has become increasingly aware of the needs, demands, and responsibilities of these teachers of English. They have also become aware from the geographical distribution of students attracted to the program of the demand for programs like Michigan's. Listed below are colleges from which students have come, where they have successfully completed their visiting teacher experience, and where the graduates of this program have returned to their home institution or have been hired elsewhere:

Monroe Community College- Michigan

University of Bridgeport- Connecticut

Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus- Michigan

Washtenaw Community College- Michigan

Southwestern Community College- Michigan

Harrisburg Area Community College- Pennsylvania

Prairie View A&M- Texas

Wayne County Public Schools- Michigan

Albion Public Schools- Michigan

Muskegon Heights Public Schools- Michigan

Penta Technical Institute- Ohio

Fayetteville State College- North Carolina

Macomb County Community College- Michigan

Washington D.C. Public School System- Washington, D.C.

Northern Michigan University- Michigan

University of Michigan, Flint Campus- Michigan

Paul Smith College- New York

Albion College- Michigan

Indiana State University at Edwardsville- Indiana

Virginia Western Community College- Virginia

Virginia Commonwealth University- Virginia

Miami-Dade Community College- Florida

Dabney S. Lancaster Community College- Virginia

Salt Lake City Public Schools- Utah

Peace Corps- East Africa

Jackson Community College- Michigan

Northern Illinois University- Illinois

Kansas Newman College- Kansas

Principia College- Illinois

Wayne County Community College- Michigan

Visiting Teacher Site

Kalamazoo Valley Community College- Michigan

John Tyler Community College- Virginia

Miami-Dade Community College (North)- Florida

Oakland Community College (Orchard Ridge)- Michigan

Washtenaw Community College- Michigan

Harrisburg Area Community College- Pennsylvania

Kellogg Community College- Michigan

Northern Michigan University- Michigan

University of Michigan, Flint Campus- Michigan

Malcolm X Community College- Illinois

Lansing Community College- Michigan

Virginia Western Community College- Virginia

Macomb County Community College- Michigan

Wayne County Community College- Michigan

Jackson Community College- Michigan

Kansas Newman College- Kansas

Christian Brother College- Tennessee

Hired by

Albion College- Michigan

John Tyler Community College- Virginia

Suffolk Community College- New York

Oakland Community College (Orchard Ridge)- Michigan

Washtenaw Community College- Michigan

Indian River Community College- Florida

Harrisburg Area Community College- Pennsylvania

Prairie View A&M- Texas

Boston University- Massachusetts

Haverford College- Pennsylvania

Sacred Heart University- Connecticut

Macomb County Community College- Michigan

University of Michigan, Flint campus- Michigan

Malcolm X Community College- Illinois

Virginia Western Community College- Virginia

Miami-Dade Community College- Florida

Jackson Community College- Michigan

Kansas Newman College- Kansas

Christian Brothers College- Tennessee

Wayne County Community College- Michigan

Cooperating institutional representatives have continually praised the D.A. students. Their teaching ability, knowledge of new information in their field, and willingness to work have all been mentioned. But the major comment that continues to be expressed is the concern of our students for their own students. This Program cannot take credit for the latter; the people who have come to us were concerned with students prior to enrolling at Michigan. The comment does speak, however, to the point that this feeling, this belief, has been encouraged, not stifled and the program's description is in and of itself an example of their belief.

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